

Thorbjørn Lausten

Stalke Project
Admiralgade 22, Copenhagen

October 1987

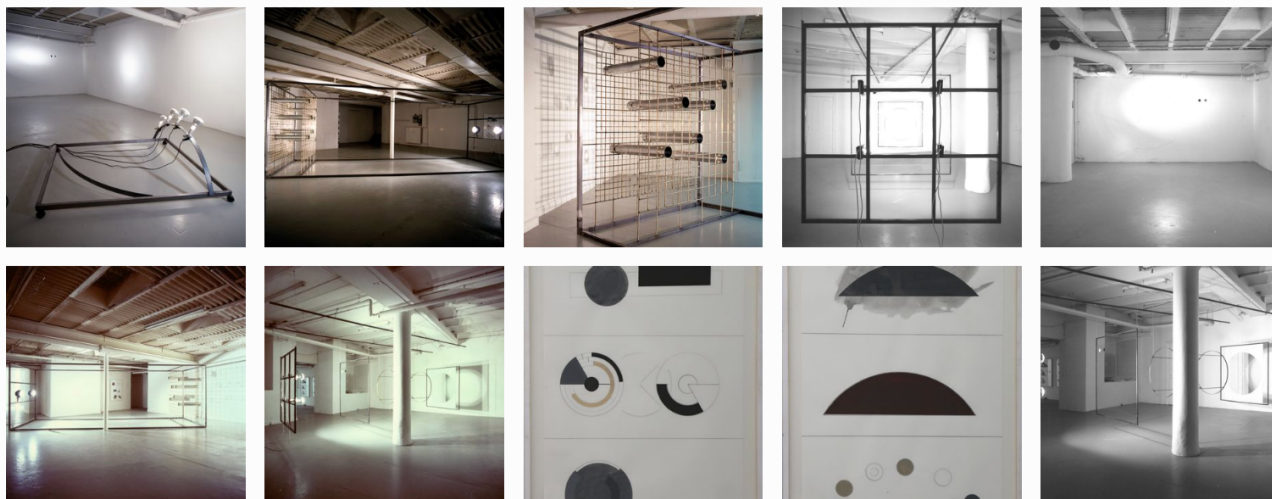
Reviews and Reception

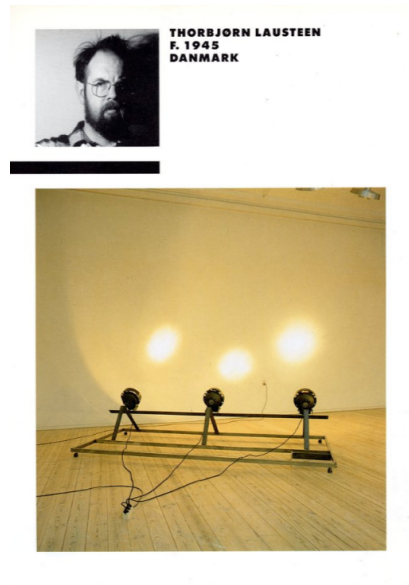
In connection with Thorbjørn Lausten's exhibition at Stalke Project, Admiralgade 22, in October 1987, the presentation was reviewed in the Danish art press. Among these was a review published in *Kunstavisen* (no. 8, Oct./Nov. 1987) by **Torben Weirup**.

The review addresses Lausten's use of light as both a physical material and a structuring element within the exhibition space. Weirup focuses on how the spatial installations and light sculptures activate the viewer's movement and perception, and how light operates in close dialogue with the architecture rather than as a purely decorative feature. Emphasis is placed on the works' precise construction, technical consistency, and the way energy, transformation, and spatial experience emerge as central themes of the exhibition.

The review documents an early and sustained critical engagement with Lausten's practice and highlights Stalke Project's role as a platform for experimental, spatially oriented art in the late 1980s.

(The review can be found in the archive of Kunstavisen, Oct./Nov. 1987.)





Light Sculpture 1987

With a foundation in concrete art, Thorbjørn Laustsen has developed a form of installation art that extensively relates to conceptual frameworks from various fields. His first electric sculptures/installations are from 1972, where he began to incorporate aspects of physics and epistemology in an artistic context. Later, a series of works emerged, where the perception and conceptualization of time and energy have been central. A characteristic feature of these works is the use of strong white light. Often, the lamps used are connected to on-and-off mechanisms, so that on-off, plus-minus, relate to the artistic conceptual and epistemological world he has developed. (His works can, among others, be seen at the National Gallery of Denmark and in the Copper Engraving Collection.)

Interview with Thorbjørn Laustsen:

STALKE: What will you present in the project?

TH. L.: I will present new things: Two large light installations and three smaller lightings. In addition, a series of large drawings related to the exhibited pieces and showing my way of working in general. The lightings are made for the rooms here, which I find very fascinating with their blend of rawness and being set up.

The two large pieces are each 6 meters long. One I call "Determinator." It carries various linguistic meanings. It's a long thing standing on the floor with two very strong light sources plus several sculptural elements. It uses light in a way that gives it a symbolic meaning, both physically—e.g., through its quantum-mechanical aspects—and metaphorically.

The other piece, which I call "Regenerator," might be more complex. It does not stand; it hangs. It consists of different sculptural elements and uses cosmic radiation. The installation is connected to a Geiger counter that reacts when hit by an electron from the outer atmosphere. In this way, I expand the sculpture so that it extends far beyond the exhibition space itself. Furthermore, I use one of the themes I've worked with for many years: the interplay between order and randomness. I let one of the particles mentioned start a processor-controlled program, creating an interaction between randomness and structuring. The interaction between randomness and structuring is one of the issues relevant to current discussions about systems.

STALKE: You work a lot with light in your pieces. What is the reason for this?

TH. L.: There are several reasons, some conscious, others more unconscious. Light is visual energy, and I see it conceptually as when one generally equates energy with matter, light (energy) appears as the visible expression of matter in its state. Light has had great significance in art, religion, and cultural history—far greater significance than we've been aware of, in my opinion.

Thus, for example, the classical painter has always engaged with light. In our century, we have had the opportunity, with the help of electricity, to reproduce light and utilize it. Beyond what can be seen with the light itself, it also holds many possibilities for gaining insight into what we call nature. In many ways, light is a metaphor for how nature/matter operates, as it allows us, through light, to understand how matter functions down to its smallest particles. In this sense, we are delving into quantum mechanics.

Quantum mechanics (the behavior of atoms) was established at the beginning of this century when scientists tried, through the theories they developed about the nature of matter (i.e., light), to understand the essence of nature in its deepest form. That effort never succeeded, and it likely never will. However, I believe light is a natural medium for art in this century, and to such a degree that it has dominated the altered physical worldview. Furthermore, as I initially stated, light encompasses many psychological aspects.

STALKE: Why do you specifically use white light?

TH. L.: White light is a blend of all frequencies, i.e., all the colors of light we know. Or rather, all colored light is a refraction of white light. But that's only the physical aspect. Its psychological content is much harder to explain exhaustively. Both the white colors and white light carry symbolic meaning, cultural-historical significance, and even religious implications.

Personally, white light has had far greater appeal to me than colored light. This might be the result of an artistic tradition, represented by figures like Malevich and Mondrian and other constructivists, with whom I share many ideas.

STALKE: The titles you use for your pieces in this exhibition, such as "Determinator" and "Regenerator"—what do they mean?

TH. L.: I have often used titles that end with "-tor." This draws attention to something currently functioning. The prefix "de-" is normally a negation of what follows. The root meaning of "-terminator" signifies something that ends, something destructive. "Determinator" is, therefore, the opposite. I've worked on this idea for many years: a kind of non-entropy. It implies a structuring force, while at the same time, it is also a destructive force because it follows a dissipative process, meaning light/energy is continuously scattered without seeming to follow any specific laws. It disappears as a kind of blind force of nature.

We also know the word "to be determined" in Danish. It means being decided upon something. One can also say it refers to a decision, something structured in such a way that one knows what was decided. That is essentially the reason why I call this piece "Determinator."

As for the "Regenerator," it references work I did some years ago, which I called "Generators." These works originated from a continuous revival. It is a repetition of that but also a partial processing of that concept, which is inherent in nearly all phenomena, namely, that repetition often occurs.

Within art and psychology, it is fascinating that, when one looks at empty things, so-called blank surfaces, one often assigns meaning to them. That meaning often disappears only to resurface at a later time. I believe this is a shared feature of many artworks that attempt to transcend what is typically called the aesthetic function.



Thorbjørn Lausten, Stalke photo Archive